

Four Graces For The Glory of God

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[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and turn to Luke chapter 2.!

That God, through Dr. Luke, reveals this story beginning in Luke chapter 2, verse 1. In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.

[1 : 36] She wrapped him in clothes and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Today in the town of David, A Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you.

You will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger. Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men, on whom his favor rests.

[2 : 55] It was my oversight in not getting the news to stand as well that our brother Mark Clinesmith lost his brother this week out in Utah, and so we want to remember Mark as well in prayer.

It's my plan today, then, to wrap up our study on the four essential graces of the Christian life, and so before we leave them, let me quiz you once more so that after I'm gone, you will still remember them, as Peter says.

So, four graces of the Christian life. Humility, the great and dearer. Faith, the great and dearer. Love, the great and hope, the great and dearer. Now, what do we mean when we say that these are graces of the Christian life?

Well, just that they're not natural characteristics that we were born with, but rather supernatural, spiritual characteristics produced in the hearts of believers by the Spirit of God, and that through the means of the Word of God.

[4 : 15] We can no more create these graces in our lives than we could create a sun or a moon in the universe. No, they are fruits of the Spirit.

They are His workmanship in the hearts and lives of God's people. And yet, this is important for us to get as well. Though these graces are His work in us, yet it is the repeated emphasis of Scripture that we are to make every effort to grow in these and other graces, Christ-like graces.

This is our responsibility to put on these graces, to clothe ourselves with them. And that requires discipline and hard work.

It requires prayer and the consistent, constant meditation upon the Word of God, which is His instrument by which the Spirit produces and grows these graces in our lives.

So, we're at the question of motivation then. What is a cause big enough to motivate me to give myself to the spiritual disciplines necessary to grow in these graces?

[5 : 35] Why should I do this? And one answer is, I trust something we've seen for our own good. For our own good. I trust we've seen just how necessary these graces are to living the Christian life that God has called us to.

We can't live without them this Christian life. But there's an even greater motive that resonates in the heart of every true child of God and that is this.

For the glory of God. Now here we're at the very center of why we were created and why we were recreated in the new birth.

This is why God saved us. This is why we exist. Why we're still alive and breathing on earth. That we might bring glory to God.

That praise and honor might flow to our God. That others would think well of Him. Think big of Him. Think well of Him because of us and the way that we are living.

[6 : 43] This is the chief end of man. The foremost purpose for our existence. and must be the aim in all that we do for whether you eat or drink or whatever you do.

Do it all for the glory of God. Now that includes growing in these Christ-like graces. Do it for the glory of God.

Jesus said it in John 15 8 This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit. My Father's the gardener and when you bear much fruit He is glorified.

What a gardener that He should get such wonderful fruits out of you as humility, faith, love and hope. Think of it. You, you are just a dead stick, a branch lying on the ground, lifeless, fuel for the fire.

And God grafted you into Christ His Son, the living vine. He united you to Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus.

[7 : 53] 1 Corinthians 1.30 And now in Christ Jesus you are bearing fruit. And the more fruit you bear the more glory it gives to God the gardener.

Paul prayed for this very purpose. for the Philippian believers that they might be filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1.11 That's what Paul aimed at for himself. Philippians 1.20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be magnified in my body whether by life or by death.

Christ magnified Christ made much of. A little boy traveled with his father to go hear the famous evangelist George Whitefield and when he returned home his mother asked him what he thought of the evangelist and he just said he made God look big.

He made God look big mom. You see Whitefield magnified God. God is big and Whitefield's preaching made him look big because men have little thoughts about this big God.

[9 : 25] God. And even so you are to do with your life and by these graces what Whitefield did by his preaching. You are to make God look big.

You are to magnify and glorify and make much of your great God. So in this concluding message I just want to go back over these four graces and answer this question.

how do these four graces in your life promote the glory of God? How does how does humility, faith, love and hope honor the Lord Jesus, give praise and lift up the reputation of God?

So we begin with humility and the great God of highest heaven is magnified, is glorified by a humble people.

God is such a great and majestic being that those who know him walk humbly before him. Micah 6, 8. Seeing him high and lifted up, their proud hearts are humbled and made low and they find their proper place then beneath him in awe of his greatness, his otherness.

[10 : 54] So your humility, Christian, declares just how much higher and greater and more worthy your God is. Let me give some examples of this.

First of all, how does your humility glorify God? In Isaiah 66, 2, this is the Lord speaking and he says, this is the one I esteem, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and who trembles at my word. Now here God shows the kind of humility that he esteems, that he highly values, that when I speak, she listens and listens with reverence and awe, with trembling, highest regard and then she humbles herself, putting herself under that word, not only listening but doing what it says and just because I say it, that's the woman I esteem, she who trembles at my word.

That's humility and that humility honors me, the Lord says. It honors me in so many ways. It honors my greatness, the greatness of my authority and right to command her.

It honors my goodness that she would delight in my laws which are good and it honors my saving work that she is so humbly thankful that she would offer herself up as a living sacrifice to do whatever I command her.

[12:27] So here you are again, sitting at Jesus' feet, soaking up his word week after week or there at home, treasuring his word, humbly bowing before his revealed will, sweetly submissive to him.

Your humility before the scriptures loudly proclaims that the God who speaks here is a great and good God.

and is to be listened to as for our very lives. It's the opposite of the one who's dismissive of the word, who refuses to bow beneath it.

And what does he say by that action? He says he's no big deal. The God of this book is no big. No, he is. And that's why we put ourselves under, we humble ourselves and tremble at his word.

A humble devotion to God's word proclaims his matchless worth and glorifies him. Now this humility was seen clearest in the son of God.

[13:39] When we're told humbled himself and became a man, even a servant, serving the will of his heavenly father and serving the needs of a countless number of sinners.

humbly obedient to his father's word. Even when his father's word said to him, you go and be damned for your bride.

He was obedient. That was his humility. He was obedient, even unto death, even the death of the cross. What humility to put himself under God's word, not my will, but yours be done.

And what a glorious father he has. That he would honor him with his humble obedience. And that's what you do when you humble yourself.

What a glorious father you have to find that all of his children are humbly submissive to his will. So there's a family and they're shopping at the shoe store and father's got a young child in each arm and mother's trying on some shoes to purchase and two year old boy is trying to pull all the shoe boxes off the shelves.

[14:58] And so father says to the eight year old daughter, Susie, I want you to play with your brother. Keep him busy so he doesn't pull the boxes down. And Susie says, yes, daddy, and cheerfully puts down what she was doing and obeys at once.

And the clerk says, wow, where'd you get that one? I don't see much of that around here. You see, her humble obedience was an honor to her parents.

It honored her parents to see her humbly obeying, delighting. What parents she must have that she would cheerfully obey instead of proudly and defiantly doing their own thing.

even so, your humble obedience to God reveals his greatness, his goodness to his own. But also, humility is the great emptier, isn't it?

And it empties you of your proud thoughts of self. It empties you of your self-directedness, I'll go where I want to go. It empties you of self-worship that has all of your life revolving around you and what you want.

[16:10] It empties you of self-sufficiency and dependence on your own wisdom, your own strength, your own righteousness. This is, I don't need God. I'm getting along just fine without him, thank you.

While forgetting that your next breath is in his hand to either give or to withhold. Yes, you are full of yourselves, but this God-given grace of humility emptied you, didn't it?

And it's continuing to empty you of your pride that says, I know best what's best for me. And this humility magnifies then the all-sufficiency of God to supply all you need.

Humility has taught you to say, I am poor and needy. I don't have what it takes and what I need, but God is rich and generous. And so your emptiness glorifies his fullness, his goodness.

This grace of humility has freed you from a self-serving life and has turned you to care about God's doing God's will and also serving the needs of others around you.

[17:27] And that humble service is as attractive as proud selfishness is ugly. and it cannot be missed in this self-centered world and it points away from self to this unselfish God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And he has made much of, magnified. And so the great God of highest heaven is glorified by humble people. They're his people.

What a God he must be to remake proud sinners into humble servants of God and men. He who is so high and lofty deserves to be glorified by a lowly people who like him are willing to stoop to bless others.

So that's how humility contributes to the glory of God in the world. What about faith? The God of great faithfulness is glorified by a people of living faith.

Faith is the great receiver. It's the empty hands that realizes our emptiness and our needs and so looks away from self and looks up to receive all from my faithful God, believing that he is all I need. [18:48] And when I do that, God is glorified for his faithfulness, for his goodness. Now, what must be two of the most exaggerated and misused words in marital conflict are these.

You always and you never. I'm sure that none of you have ever used those words, but if you did, it did not contribute to the resolving of the conflict, did it?

Because it is rarely the truth that they always or they never. But always and never can be rightly used of our God.

He's just that consistent. David cries in Psalm 119 132. Turn to me and have mercy on me as you always do to those who love your name.

Turn to me and have mercy on me as you always do to those who love your name. that is to those who love you.

[19:58] All that you are is revealed in your name. So gather all of God's true people who love his name and ask them when you've turned to God and cried for help, what have you found?

And to a person they will say, he always turns to me and has mercy on me. And I say, oh, you mean most of the time?

No, I mean all the time. I mean every time as he always does to those who love his name. Always is a word that points to the great faithfulness of our God.

So is the word never, as the psalmist used it in Psalm 9 and verse 10, those who know your name will trust in you. For you Lord have never forsaken those who seek you.

Never forsaken. Again, gather all together who know, trust and seek the Lord and ask them what they found. How many times has the Lord forsaken you in your life?

[21:05] Never, never once. Jesus never fails. Never, never fails. I'm glad, so glad. Jesus never fails.

God has this perfect track record with his people. Always having mercy and never forsaking them. Now, that's a record you and I can safely trust in and never be put to shame. That's a record that encourages us to hold out our empty hands of faith to receive mercy and grace to help us in our time of need always and never.

And when in your emptiness, dear Christian, in your need, you look away to God in faith, he is glorified. For your faith in him draws attention to his faithfulness, to his power, to his goodness and love.

What must be your father? What must he be like to draw out such faith in you? For you to run to him with all your needs and expect to receive from him all that he's promised no matter how hopeless the circumstances.

[22:23] And that was Abraham, wasn't it? Romans 4 verses 17 to 21 tell us that story in very few words. How Abraham was given the promise of God, I have made you a father of many nations.

Now, the only thing that we need to realize at this point is that when that promise was made, I have made you a father of many nations. He had no children by Sarah, the one that would bear the promised seed.

She was barren, they have no children, they're both getting older, I have made you the father of many nations. And in spite of all of that, he believed in God who gives life to the dead and calls those things that are not as though they were.

And against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations just as it had been said to him, so shall your offspring be like those stars, can you count them?

He had a promise, but it was a naked promise. It had nothing to clothe it in the way of circumstances that made it appear even to be plausible, even to be doable, nothing but a bare promise, but from an almighty and faithful God to encourage his faith.

[23:46] And so, without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since it was about a hundred years old, and he faced the fact that Sarah's womb was dead.

Yet, he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith, and here it is, and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to do.

His faith gave glory to God. And so did yours. When you hang on to a bare promise, you've not been promised to be the father or the mother of an offspring as great as the sands of the seas, but you have been promised that all your needs will be met in Christ Jesus.

And you have been promised that God's grace is sufficient for you in every trouble. So what is the trouble?

What is it in your life? What circumstance that seems to mock the promise that as you face the facts around you, you have no idea what help is going to come from.

[25 : 05] And yet you still believe and with the empty hands of faith, you look to God to receive from him. And each time you do, you're bringing glory to God.

You're saying of him, he's able, he's able, I know he is able, I know my Lord is able to carry me through. Nothing is too hard for him.

You're saying he's faithful, he's faithful, I know that he's faithful. Never has he, never can he go back on his word. So faith doesn't need favorable circumstances either to survive or to thrive.

Faith feeds on the promiser. His power, his faithfulness excites our faith, opens our empty hands to receive from his fullness. forgiveness. Maybe you're wondering, how am I going to make it through this trial?

How am I going to make it through this week, this month, this day? How am I going to make it all the way to heaven without falling away? He who promised is faithful.

[26 : 10] Faithful is he who called you, who also will do it. Rest in that. There's enough in God to keep you believing and receiving. don't waver in unbelief.

Hold on to the bare promise. Hold on to the promiser. And as you do, your faith will bring glory to God. Faith, the great receiver, brings glory to God, the great giver.

Now, there's a cause, isn't there? There's a cause to be growing in faith, that it might glorify our good and gracious, giving God. love.

Well, love, and I'm going to be very brief on this. The God of love is glorified by a loving family. 1 John 4, 8 says, God is love.

That means he's the overflowing fountain of all love that exists in the universe. He is love. And all other love is of the overflow of him.

[27 : 14] So we are never more God-like than when we are loving others as he loves. We're never more God-like than when we love like he loves because the love with which we love is his love dwelling in our hearts by his spirit.

It's a love that gives and gives and gives again because love is the great giver. And it gives cheerfully. It gives sacrificially. And it's this in this self-centered, self-serving, self-indulgent world that God has a family of selfless lovers who like him delight in doing good to others who find great joy in making others joyful.

And when you love like that, God is glorified. I believe that's no small part of what Jesus means in Matthew 5 and verse 16 when he says, let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven.

No small part of our good deeds are deeds of love. That's the whole summary of what goodness is and good deeds are. It's to love our neighbor as ourself. And as people see your good deeds, your love in action, they will give glory and glory will come to God, your father.

Love's the first fruit of the spirit who creates such God like grace in us that God's name might be honored on the earth. A God of love is glorified by a loving family of God.

[28 : 58] And then lastly, hope. The God of hope is glorified by a people overflowing in hope. Romans 15, 13. One headline reads, Americans once known for their optimism are losing hope.

Losing hope in government. Losing hope in the courts. Losing hope in the press. In the police. In the economy. In the education.

Many are losing hope that things will ever improve. Now to be sure there are non-Christians who have hope. There are non-Christians who have hope.

But their hopes are ungrounded hopes that will eventually be dashed. But Christians have a hope that nothing can take away. In fact, their hope shines brightest when the world sees no reason for their hope.

So in the face of death, the death of a loved one, we do not grieve as those who have no hope. No, we grieve but we grieve with hope, hope, a living hope in the resurrection due to Christ's resurrection from the dead.

[30 : 10] We have hope in the face of our own death. We're not like those whose only hope is in this life for our hope assures us that death takes us to be with Christ which is better by far and our best days are yet in front of us.

And when earthly things are lost, somehow ripped out of our hands, perhaps even wrongfully, we don't throw a discontented pity fit for ourselves.

But as Hebrews 10 34 says that we gladly accept the confiscation of our possessions because we know we have better and lasting possessions that are coming.

our hope our hope and when things as unmovable as the mountains are being shaken a constitutional government long enjoyed freedoms prosperity health law and order common sense our hope our hope is unmoved since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

So as everything else shakes around us we're standing on the solid rock of Christ and the kingdoms he is bringing that cannot be shaken and when this world is swaying under the ruin of sin and the curse we have the sure hope of a new heaven and a new earth the home of righteousness at the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ who is our happy hope and that in all circumstances so you see the worse that things get around us the more our hope ought to shine and stick out like light in darkness hope in hopelessness and it's precisely in a hopeless world in difficult circumstances of suffering and loss that we have a special opportunity to glorify God as our hope is seen to survive and even thrive in great trials it can't be missed what's keeping her going when life hurts so bad and according to Peter it is precisely in the fearful day in the day of painful trials even when suffering mistreatment for doing what is right it's then that we're always to be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you our hope is to beg the question

[32 : 49] Peter's assumption is that people will see such solid hope in us in situations for which there's no reason for hope that it will make them curious to know the reason we do have hope and there's our opportunity to tell them let me tell you his name his name is Christ Jesus the son of God and he died for my sins and so has remedied my greatest problem in life in time and eternity all my sins are forgiven I have peace with God furthermore nothing that happens to me now can separate me from his love indeed he promises that he will work everything together for my good to make everything fit his purpose for my salvation and he's coming back to live with me forever and ever and to make all things new this is the reason for my happy hope do you have it it could be yours you see how God is glorified as his people find in him hope in every circumstance in the worst of circumstances they're still expecting good from his hand because of his promises and they face it with bright hope for tomorrow what goodness must dwell in this

God that his people would be hanging on to such hope so the question is there not a cause then is this not a cause to make every effort to grow in these graces of humility faith hope and love that God may be honored for the great and good God that he is I say there's no higher cause and you notice how these four graces are all our responses to something in God our humility is the response to his greatness our faith is the response to his greater faithfulness our love is the response to his greater love and our hope is responding to his promised future good so what will you do to grow in humility this year what will you do to grow in faith hope and love the graces of God's spirit so pray pray to grow in these graces but the spirit works by his word so be found in it come and hear it preached and taught and explained and applied read it in your homes meditate on it memorize it pour over it that's the instrument by which the spirit builds these graces let the

Bible lead you into heart to heart dealings with God because to know him is to love him and to know him is to trust him and to trust him is to hope in him and to hope in him is to walk hum or to is to know him is to walk humbly before him so you see he's worthy of having a people who show forth his worthiness and let us seek his greater glory on earth by growing in these Christ-like graces may next year find us advancing in each of these four graces just a few concluding remarks and we're done the first is this that the world needs a people who bring glory to God the world needs such a people you know the devil's plan for ruining God's good world began with spreading slanderous lies about

God to Eve that if God would not let her eat from any tree she wanted to eat from then he clearly wasn't looking out for her best intention her best interests but was only wanting to hold her back

from her potential and to spoil her happiness oh his threat of death it's an empty threat he won't do anything he's just trying to scare you and control you Eve such a God is not good is not generous therefore can't be trusted with your life listen to me and follow your own instincts and ever since Eve bought into the devil's slanderous lies about God this world has been believing and repeating them saying that God's laws are bondage that freedom and fulfillment will only come in rejecting God's laws and going your own way and the sinful nature of man is predisposed to believe the lie more than the truth now that's the world and that's the explanation for the mess that she's in and that's why she needs a people who will tell the world and who will show the world what God is really like you're a people who know the truth about

God so what is God really like well he's like Jesus and Jesus is like God indeed the sun is the radiance of God's glory the exact representation of his being and Jesus likeness is being worked out in your life in your humility faith hope and love and so the world is to be able to watch you and to see the truth about God he is good he is generous he is merciful he is holy he is just he is righteous he's faithful and so God has placed a people in this world with the mission of glorifying him because the world needs to know God as he really is put him on display by walking humbly with him in faith hope and love and then secondly believers you're a part of the bigger story of bringing glory to [39 : 30] God it's the grand cause it's the great plan that brought the son of God out of heaven 2000 years ago to earth at the birth of Jesus the angel announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people today in the town of David a savior has been born to you he's Christ the Lord and suddenly a great company of the heavenly hosts appeared with the angel praising God and saying glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests this baby has come on a mission a mission of the ages designed to bring glory to God in the highest he's come to uphold the damaged honor of God on the earth and he will accomplish this by saving a multitude of sinners restoring peace on earth the shalom that sin had destroyed and the manner and the way of working out this salvation will put on display the truth about

God it will shatter those lies and it will bring into light the glory and majesty of God his love his grace his goodness his justice his truth his faithfulness and that will bring him everlasting honor and praise and so this grand plan that Jesus came into the world to accomplish this grand plan sweeps you up dear Christian it includes you you're a part of this plan now of glorifying God shattering the lies about him and your lives are to show forth by your humility God's greatness by your faith his faithfulness and goodness your hope his trustworthiness so let's embrace our glorious privilege and our responsibility to magnify the

Lord to make much of him to spread his fame to tell of his glory and lost sinner if you're outside of Christ you're still believing the lie that's just the way it is you're still robbing God of his glory you're still refusing to give him the praise he is due you're holding back your life as if he's not worthy of it refusing to receive him to trust him with your life and with your eternity and yet he still pursues you with mercy he's chasing you down to bless you he's the hound of heaven that's following you down with grace and love and mercy learn something about the truth of God in that he's chasing you down to save you so quit running from him turn and run into his arms receive him and he'll receive you and he'll have mercy on you as he always does to those who seek him let's pray our good and gracious

God we do bow in your presence and acknowledge you as God alone there is no other and we thank you that you revealed yourself in nature you revealed yourself in history you revealed yourself in your word and you revealed yourself in your son and what we learn about you causes us to bow before you and want to adore you and glorify you please stir up that desire more and more have mercy upon those who are lost and upon this hopeless world and may they see in us something that would bring glory to you and bring them to you we ask it for Jesus praise we ask it for the praise of our father in heaven and that through the holy spirit in Jesus name amen